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147 corporal inconvenience. The Abipones are
151 highly sensible of the impressions of the elements, the injuries of weapons, and the pain arising from these causes, but are not so much overcome and exhausted by them as most others, either because they are blessed with a better temperature of blood and humours, and greater strength of limbs and muscles, or because the hardships they have been accustomed to from childhood, render them callous, or because their eager thirst after military fame impels them to deny that anything gives them pain, though they be ever so much affected by it.

145 I have already observed that they seldom grow bald, and not grey till at an advanced period of life. Even when arrived at extreme age they can hardly be said to have grown old, like certain plants which are always green and
000 vigorous. Cicero, in his treatise on Old Age, bestows great praise on Massinissa, king of Mauritania, who, at ninety years of age, *cùm ingressus iter pedibus sit, in equum omninò non ascendit: cùm equo, ex equo non descendit. Nullo imbre, nullo frigore adducitur, ut capite operto sit. Exequitur omnia regis officia et munera, &c.* The
145 Roman orator would find all the old Abipones
● 887 so many Massinissas, or even more vigorous than Massinissa. He would scarce believe his

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own eyes were he to see men, almost a hundred years old, leap on to a fiery horse, without the aid of a stirrup, like a boy of twelve years old, sit it for hours, and even whole days, beneath a burning sun, climb trees for honey, travel or lie upon the ground in cold or rainy weather, contend with the enemy in battle, shrink from no toils of the army or the chase, evince wonderful acuteness both of sight and hearing, preserve all their teeth quite sound, and seem only to be distinguished by the number of their years from men in the prime of life. All these things will hardly be credited in Europe where they are so rare. In the colonies of the Abipones I daily beheld old men, like youths in every other respect but that of age, without surprize. If a man dies at eighty he is lamented as if cut off in the flower of his age. Women generally live longer than men, because they are not killed in war, and because the moistness of their nature renders them more long lived. You find so many old women a hundred years of age, amongst the Abipones, that you may wonder at, but will scarce be able to count them. I cannot say that the pedestrian nations of Paraguay enjoy equal strength and longevity. The Guaranies, Lules, Isistines, Vilelas, and other pedestrian Indians, are subject to diseases like the Europeans, and

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ried industry. They despatch the household business with which they are daily overwhelmed, with alacrity and cheerfulness. It is their task to make clothes for their husbands and children; to fetch eatable roots, and various fruits from the woods; to gather the alfaroba, grind it, and convert it into drink, and to get water and wood for the daily consumption of the family. A ridiculous custom is in use amongst the Abipones, of making the most aged woman in the horde provide water for all domestic purposes. Though the river may be close at hand, the water is always fetched in large pitchers on horseback, and the same method is observed in getting wood for fuel. You will never hear one of these women complain of fatigue, however many cares she may have to employ her mind. A noble Spaniard had a captive Abiponian woman in his service many years, and he assured me that she was more useful and valuable to him than three other servants, because she anticipated his orders, and did her business seasonably, accurately, and quickly. They justly claim the epithet of the *devout female sex*. No sooner do they hear the sound of the bell than they all fly to hear the Christian religion explained, and listen to the preacher with attentive ears. They highly approve the law of Christ, because by it no husband is allowed to put

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CHAPTER XXV.

OF THE RITES WHICH ACCOMPANY AND SUCCEED THE DEATH OF AN ABIPON.

DEATH is dreadful to most mortals, but particularly so to the Abipones. They cannot even bear the sight of a dying person. Hence, whenever any one's life is despaired of, his fellow inmates immediately forsake the house, or are driven away by the old women who remain to take care of the sick, lest they should be so affected by the mournful spectacle, that fear of death should make them shrink from endangering their lives in battle. They are, therefore, obliged to pass many nights in another person's tent, or in the open air. As they have very little experience of persons dying a natural death, they do not know the signs of it when it draws near. A short abstinence from food, unusual silence, or sleeplessness, makes them presage approaching dissolution. As soon as a report is spread that a man is dying, the old women, who are either related to the person, or famed for medical skill, flock to his house. They stand in a row round the sick man's bed, with dishevelled hair

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and bare shoulders, striking a gourd, the mournful sound of which they accompany with violent motion of the feet and arms, and loud vociferations. She who excels the rest in age, or fame for medical skill, stands nearest to the dying man's head, and strikes an immense military drum, which returns a horrible bellowing. Another, who is appointed to watch the sick man, removes every now and then the bull's hide with which he is covered, examines his face, and if he seems yet to breathe, sprinkles him plentifully with cold water, a jug of which is placed under the bed. When I first witnessed these things, I pitied the fate of the sick man, who, I feared, would be killed, if not by the disease, at any rate by the howling of the women and the noise of the drum, or else smothered by the weight of the hide, with which the whole body is covered, and which is as hard and as heavy as a board. Under the pretext of compassion, they use all this cruelty to the departing soul, that the women may be spared the sight of his last agonies, and the hearing of his groans.

If the respiration of the dying man be not heard at a distance like a pair of bellows in Vulcan's workshop, and if his breath stop even for a moment, they proclaim with a Stentorian voice, that he has given up the ghost. A great crowd assembles on all sides, exclaiming, he is dead,